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NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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EVALUATION OF 1952 NATIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION INSTITUTE

Participants in the National Food and Nutrition Institute held in December 1952 recently were asked to evaluate it. This appraisal was undertaken at the request of the Planning Committee of the Institute for guidance in planning conferences of this kind. Participants were asked to comment in any way they chose, perhaps including answers to these questions:

1. In what way, if any, did the Institute help bring you up-to-date on food and nutrition information and suggest new approaches to nutrition education?
2. In addition to the topics covered by the speakers what others would you have liked to have had included?
3. What kind of followup have you undertaken or are planning as a result? Any new activities? Any change in emphasis in programs?
4. Have the *Proceedings* been useful? In what way?

Because respondents were not asked to answer specific questions systematically and because the rate of return was low and not representative of conference attendance, no statistical presentation is made. It was thought that phases of the Institute which respondents selected to comment on would be those which they felt were particularly good or bad.

Letters were sent to the 425 who registered; about 110 replied. About 40 percent was from workers in private and public health agencies; 30 percent from education, school lunch, and research; 20 percent from extension and agriculture; and 10 percent from industry and press. Conference attendance by fields was respectively about 30, 30, 30, and 10 percent.

A summary of replies is included here for use of members of State and local nutrition committees who might find it helpful in planning their own institutes. A report of the Institute was given in February 1953 NCN.

THE SUBJECT MATTER

Most respondents felt that the Institute served very well to review progress since 1941, summarize the present state of nutritional knowledge, focus attention on unsolved problems, indicate trends, and show the work still to be done. Many indicated that they had learned much that was new to them. The review reassured others that they

had the latest information and were emphasizing most urgent problems.

In Their Own Words. A community nutritionist said, "To me [the institute] was like a refresher course." College professors wrote: "It helped me get a more complete picture of what is being done in research throughout the country." "[It] greatly enriched my teaching, pointing attention to the practical problems." ". . . particular interest in learning of the groups in the population which seem to have the poorest diets." "Institute did much to broaden my base of perspective especially in the areas of production, distribution, and consumer behavior."

A school lunch supervisor said, "Figures and charts on dietary deficiencies have been of help . . . [to] understand why some foods are supplied by our Federal lunch program."

A nutritionist in public health was "most conscious of being brought up to date on . . . food laws and protection . . . [information] helpful in planning nutrition education about food faddism." One in extension said it this way, "Section on food laws and protection created an awareness . . . of need for . . . and . . . greater interest in the proposed changes in the Food and Drug Act"

Telling Statistics About the Talks. A count was made of the number of times a broad area of work or a specific topic was mentioned by respondents as being useful in bringing them up to date in nutrition and giving them new ideas for presenting nutrition information. Results indicated that papers concerned with nutritional conditions and diets of special groups in the population were the most useful. Next in value were papers on the national food situation, food laws and food protection, and nutrition and health in general.

THE VALUE OF GETTING TOGETHER

Some found it stimulating to meet national leaders and think through problems with colleagues. Satisfactions from opportunities to share views, reach a common outlook on problems, and combine efforts in a common goal were frequently mentioned. One person found the use of many different techniques ". . . conspicuously suc-

cessful in dealing with people from so many disciplines." Another wrote, "Your own planning committee, cutting across so many agencies and organizations, demonstrated the value of . . . combined effort . . . of what could be accomplished and how."

By Fields of Interest. As was to be expected, values for participants varied. A *research* worker expressed gains from contacts with people from different fields and different parts of the country thus: "The discussion group in which I participated pointed up the diversity of concepts held, even among professional people, of widely used terms. It emphasized the fact that any one individual has a limited view of a general problem or of a set of facts or of ways to use facts in solving problems. It left me with the idea that we need better communication among people working in the many fields which have a bearing on achievement of good nutrition for every individual."

A *public health* nutritionist reported, "It has influenced . . . our program planning for next year. It strengthened our resolves to improve our joint planning with other related groups, to work out some better ways to tackle the preventive angles of overweight, extreme underweight, and certain chronic diseases that seem to have nutritional implications. . . ."

From *extension* came this comment, "Through hearing the subject of nutrition presented from many angles it helped us to realize the importance of our particular field and to think through methods by which workers at the State level could cooperatively attack some of the larger problems." And one in *high school teaching* said, "Perhaps one of the greatest personal benefits to me as a homemaking teacher was the experience of participating . . . with . . . experts in their fields and to be made feel that my part in nutrition education at the 'grass roots' was a very important one."

Potential Power of the Institute. "The Institute was well worthwhile in bringing together a group of persons capable of influencing public opinion in a number of ways on some major topics affecting food and nutrition," a medical man wrote. Another participant said: "There are many intangible values which have far reaching influence on the nutrition program throughout the country which stem directly from meetings such as these . . . national backing for the support of this program is of great importance. . . ."

Fifteen respondents hoped a conference would be held again soon or at regular intervals of 1, 3, or 5 years.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Opinion was divided on the group discussions held one afternoon and morning. Each group of 20 to 30 discussed

one topic chosen out of seven, with an appointed leader, recorder, hostess, and two resource people.

A number of persons reported that the discussions gave them new ideas, reminded them of methods they had neglected for some time, made them better acquainted with other participants, and showed them other points of view.

"Too little time for discussion" and "too many in the group" were reasons for finding the groups less helpful than expected. Said one, "In theory, I know the value of audience participation, but for such a short conference . . . time would have been better spent some other way. . . . The speakers might have held discussion groups so that we could meet them and ask questions about their papers and talk with them about our problems."

Extension Post-Institute Meeting. Use of discussion group method for a very homogeneous group seems less controversial. The eight Extension workers who mentioned the post-Institute meeting arranged for their group agreed it was helpful. Committees summarized Institute talks and reports and suggested uses of the material in State extension programs. They compared the emphasis on food and nutrition in their different States and learned that many were carrying similar projects.

IDEAS FOR OTHER INSTITUTES

Several persons saw need for attention in other institutes to such questions as — how people learn, how they are motivated, and what factors are conducive to building good food habits and changing poor ones. Interdisciplinary exploration by psychiatrists, mental health education specialists, social scientists, anthropologists, nutritionists, dietitians, physicians, nurses, and social workers was suggested. Along with this participants would have liked discussions on what to include in nutrition education of lay and professional leaders and information on what is now being taught in nutrition in teacher-training schools.

Others wanted institutes to include some analysis of the effectiveness of existing methods and techniques of nutrition education, including group work. Suggestions for adapting nutrition information to teaching needs, use of more visual aids during the Institute, and a discussion on educational materials would have been welcome additions for some.

Several wanted more reports on recent and current research. A few would have liked discussions of how to assess nutritional status and of the National Research Council's Dietary Allowances in relation to current research. Still others were interested in how to apply nutrition knowledge to community problems and hearing about communities that had achieved successful nutrition programs and good coordination of nutrition activities.

Good Nutrition For All

From the Food and Nutrition Institute of 1952 came evidence of the great nutritional progress that had resulted from setting nutrition goals and developing means for attaining them at the National Nutrition Conference of 1941. Facts and figures proved the worth of concerted action toward using common tools and techniques, developing better methods of changing food habits, and improving the nutritional content of food supplies.

Institute talks made it clear, however, that the situation today is in sharp contrast to that of 1941 when top priority had to be given to programs to improve the nutritional content and distribution of national food supplies in order to eradicate dietary deficiencies. It seemed agreed that if nutritional gains are to be maintained and furthered, our current programs should be reoriented to present day nutrition problems and knowledge and to new approaches in education.

In order to attain "good nutrition for all" Institute speakers and participants indicated that now and in the years ahead research and education efforts in food and nutrition should be intensified. To this end in talks and recent letters they directed attention to several lines of work needing concerted action. Summarized as a 10-point program, these are given in the next column. Nutrition committees, including as they do representation from research, in- and out-of-school education, health, welfare, and agriculture are in position to develop a broad program. *Comments on whether the 10 points listed here meet program needs will be welcomed.*

A 10-Point Nutrition Program

1. Discover better ways to communicate nutrition information and to motivate people to use it.
2. Develop further knowledge of what to eat for best nutritional health.
3. Locate the individuals and the population groups whose diets are in need of improvement.
4. Promote the systematic teaching of nutrition in the professional training of teachers, doctors, dentists, nurses, public health and social workers, and home economists and keep their knowledge up to date through in-service and other programs.
5. Teach the "how" and "why" of food selection for good nutrition from kindergarten through college.
6. Discover ways of making the school meal experience more educational.
7. Help homemakers and other food managers responsible for the food of others learn to select food wisely and to prepare it in appealing nutrient-conserving ways.
8. Use mass media and group approaches to give better understanding of scientific nutrition, to combat food fads and nutrition misinformation, and to help overweights and underweights with their nutrition problems.
9. Be alert to opportunities to improve the nutritional value of the community's food supply.
10. Join forces with workers in education, health, agriculture, and the food industries to achieve an effective and integrated nutrition program.

A nutritionist in a food industry felt the program would have been strengthened if those whose business is the production, processing, and distribution of food had been included. Some asked for information on the international food situation.

In addition one or more persons suggested: A shorter conference (2 days), a longer conference (4 or 5 days), a slower pace with more time to talk informally with each other, more time for discussion after talks, inclusion of other disciplines among the speakers, and mixers in which workers from the same section of the country would come together to discuss problems of common interest and how to work together on them.

Such different suggestions as "cover more areas," "go more slowly," and "shorten the Institute time period," may seem irreconcilable at first but actually they should serve as useful cautions to committees planning such institutes.

INFLUENCE OF THE INSTITUTE

Experiences Shared With Others. Replies showed that the influence of the Institute fanned out to reach great numbers of people. Experiences, materials, and *Proceedings* were shared with other nutritionists, workers in allied professions, students, and interested lay persons. Meetings, classroom teaching, and the usual mass media were used.

Institute reports were given at meetings of the Chicago Nutrition Association, the Chicago Nutrition Forum, and Nutrition Committees in New Jersey, Oklahoma, Rochester (New York), South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia. "What's Cooking", the newsletter of the Texas Nutrition Committee, carried a summary. The chairman of the Subcommittee on Nutrition of the Wyoming Public Health Association prepared a release on the Institute.

Food and Nutrition Advisory Committee United States Department of Agriculture

Need for an effective National Nutrition Program in which nutritionists and workers in allied professions would pool their efforts to improve nutritional health in the United States was recognized at the November 1953 meeting of the Food and Nutrition Advisory Committee to the United States Department of Agriculture. The Committee expressed its thinking in a recommendation which reads:

"The Committee reaffirms its interest in the development of a national food and nutrition program which would have as its purpose greater coordination of activities of all agencies participating in improvement of nutrition at national, State, and local levels, to the end that their effectiveness may be increased. In the Committee's opinion, the National Food and Nutrition Institute represents a useful means for such program development, since it serves to increase understanding of nutrition problems, their underlying causes, and ways of working toward their solution; to focus attention on opportunities for interagency planning, exchange of information, and cooperative action. The Committee hopes that ways may be found for increasing such cooperation, especially with medical and public health groups and others, in order that these groups may assume increased responsibility for the advancement of research, education, and action programs leading to better nutrition throughout this country."

Papers and Proceedings Widely Used. The *Proceedings*, which were sent to all participants, have become a reference text according to respondents' replies.* Many reported use of material in it as a basis for talks, discussions, and teaching; for published articles; in planning workshops, conferences, meetings, and chapel programs; and in developing programs of work in health departments, extension services, Red Cross chapters, nutrition committees, hospitals, school lunch departments, and research agencies. Charts and figures given in the *Proceedings* were used to illustrate talks.

A teacher wrote, "Students read the reports . . . and have been required to know what is in the *Proceedings*. All ten members of the Department have used the *Proceedings* in teaching, research, outside lectures, and refresher courses. We have put some of the material on large charts."

Advantages of having in print the words spoken at the Institute were summed up in these ways: "So much information was given during the short period that it was hard to absorb all of the information and the printed re-

*Copies of *Proceedings* may still be had free from Human Nutrition Research Branch, Agriculture Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C.

ports have been useful in refreshing our memory." "References to statements . . . and to charts provided accurate quotations. . . . The bibliographies . . . have served as guides for more detailed reading. . . . The list of participants . . . has helped in knowing where to write . . . to get more information about projects."

Programs Given New Slants. Respondents have reported steering their programs toward the nutritional problems highlighted during the Institute. Weight control programs have been strengthened or newly organized. More attention is being given to nutrition of children, youths, mothers, to older persons with chronic disease, and to dental health. New work has been started in Civil Defense.

Nutrition Committee Activities Affected. Several respondents mentioned nutrition committee activities that had evidently been influenced by the luncheon meeting of State chairmen and alternates and the following panel discussion of the entire Institute audience. Nutritionists in Idaho are investigating the possibility of establishing a State nutrition advisory committee. The Maryland Nutrition Committee gained impetus in its reorganization. In Kentucky, a nutrition committee has recently announced its organization. Activities of the new Nutrition Council in Pittsburgh (Pa.) are reflecting some of the Institute recommendations. A tri-State meeting of the Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont Nutrition Committees grew out of get-togethers during the Institute.

South Carolina held a nutrition institute in connection with Farmers Week at Clemson College for about 250 professional workers in health, welfare, educational and agricultural agencies. The Michigan Nutrition Committee sponsored a Nutrition Day which 600 attended.

One of the Institute papers is helping members of the Kansas Nutrition Committee who are planning a guide for teaching nutrition in elementary schools. The Oklahoma Nutrition Committee is centering its efforts on obesity, child nutrition, and dental health.

May-June Issue

In the next issue we hope to show recent efforts of State nutrition committees along the lines brought out in these 10 points. If your committee has a project underway that should be included, send in a report of it at once. If your report does not make the deadline for the next issue, it will be included in a later one.